DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 129 211 IR 003 974

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TITLE	Developing a Statewide Library Network.
INSTITUTION	Minnesota State Dept. of Education, St. Paul. Library Div.
PUB DATE	75
NOTE	11p.
JOURNAL CIT	Minnesota Libraries; v24 n[illegible] p319-28 Win 1975
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Library Cooperation; *Library Networks; National Programs; State Legislation; *Statewide Planning
IDENTIFIERS	*Minnesota; National Commission Libraries Information Science; NCLIS

ABSTRACT

The first step in establishing a statewide library network in Minnesota is to seek passage of enabling legislation which would create a single network for all types of state libraries. Membership in the network should be voluntary, and control of budgets, staffs, and collections should remain at the local level. Creation of such statewide networks may provide a foundation for building a nationwide library network, as planned by the National Commission for Libraries and Information Science. (EMH)

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Developing A Statewide Library Network

by
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Libraries and Information Science

The last time I was in Minnesota, I attended a meeting of the Minnesota Library Association which was held in some exotic place in the mountains or lake country. I got there and discovered that there weren't any scheduled meetings — you were relaxing, loafing and enjoying the afternoon. When you finally started the late afternoon meeting, you met for about an hour and then continued relaxing again. I said to my friend, Bob Rohlf: "What does MLA do?" He said: "We enjoy our conferences."

I told someone I wanted to share a bicentennial trivia note with you. I came across an item which stated that on June 19, 1775, James Winthrop, the Librarian of Harvard College, closed the Harvard Library, picked up his musket and went off to join General John Stark's troop. He fought valiantly, was wounded, and thus became the first American librarian to shed his blood for us on behalf of his American freedom and independence. I thought you'd like to know that. In fact, the statement made the recommendation that the American Library Association set up a John Winthrop Award.

Developing a statewide library network is the topic that is on the program. I guess there are many ways to approach that topic and it depends on where you want to start. I could start by telling you what we do in Illinois and how we've done it. I could start by telling you what the State of Washington has tried to do, or New York, or Indiana, or Michigan, or even Minnesota. The important thing is not to worry so much about the past, but to worry about where you're going. I read in one of the journals that Minnesota had managed to have a victory with the legislature recently, that instead of getting completely cut, you managed to restore most of what you had hoped to get to fund your State program. I think it was $4.1 million for the biennium instead of $5 million. You got $4 million, and I think they wanted to give you $2 million; something like that. Well, that's great to get $4.1 million. I thought it was for a year. Then, Bob Rohlf told me that it was for the biennium. I say: Minnesota, SHAME — you have 4 million people; that's only fifty cents per capita. It seems to me that it's time you did better than that. You've had systems for a long time in Minnesota — a lot longer than many states. You've done very well in many ways, but still have a long way to go.

In trying to develop statewide cooperation, there's really no magic to it and there's really no purpose to it unless you understand why you're doing it. I've been saying the last few months that you and I as librarians are unique in many ways in that we dedicate our lives to serving people. We're not in a profession that pays a lot. It's not bad compared to what it used to be, but it certainly isn't as good as doctors, lawyers, etc. We really work, not for ourselves, but for the people we serve. We work in our libraries whether they're small, or medium, or large, to serve our clientele. Cooperation and statewide networks are of no value if they don't enhance that goal of serving people. So then, your goal in Minnesota is no different than the Commission has for the Nation as a whole. The goal —

to make sure that each and every resident in the State of Minnesota has access to the resources they want, when they want it, regardless of the reason for the request.

Years ago, if you wanted to borrow books on interlibrary loan, you had to be in an academic institution, you had to be doing original research, or be a faculty member. Public libraries occasionally got around those strictures but, generally speaking, it was a very tight rule. It's only been in the last five years, maybe ten years in some states, but five years in most states, that the relaxation of that rule of interlibrary loan has taken place.

We maintain at the Commission — and I am sure you must think this too — that it's really none of our business why a person wants a book. They have a right to it, whether they happen to be a scholar, a lay person, a child, a housewife, you name it. And, if they want it, that's good enough for us. How do we make sure, then, that an individual who lives in a small town of 500 or 1,000 people has the same general access, not in time mind you, but in material, as a student at the University of Minnesota who has a tremendous collection at his fingertips and has an automatic tie-in to a nationwide network, as imperfect as it is at this moment, through interlibrary loan? That's our goal.

One of the problems with service is that we have to share in order to serve. If we're going to serve everybody, we're going to have to share what we have. Sharing is easier said than done. Librarians have talked cooperation as long as I can remember. I told someone earlier tonight that I decided to become a librarian when I was in the eighth grade. I don't quite remember hearing this in the eighth grade, but certainly when I was in high school, I heard about librarians cooperating. But, as I look back now, we gave it lip service. Oh, we would had certain basic things we've always done, but when it really comes right down to it we only cooperate if we think we're going to benefit. And, if you read in *Illinois Libraries* an article I wrote some years ago, I gave the definition of cooperation as "What can I do for you?" That's the whole definition. When people in Illinois used to say to me, "If I join, what do I get out of it?" I'd say, "Nothing and don't join, do not become part of the Illinois network because all you will do is hurt it. You'll hurt yourself and you'll hurt the network because your attitude is wrong. You're in it only to get something. You're not going to truly look at the good of the whole, you're going to look at the good of yourself and your institution, and that's not good enough."

Your primary clientele is your immediate responsibility. But your responsibility includes all of the citizens of the State of Minnesota. In my case, all the citizens in the United States. I told this to some people who are involved with the Regional Medical Library Network. They were shocked that I would suggest that they had a responsibility greater than their own clientele — the doctors, nurses, and all. Do you know why? Because they look at it from a defensive attitude of protecting what they have. We all want to protect our territory. But it's not your territory, it's only yours for a temporary time while you're passing through. It's yours to share; it's paid for by taxpayer's money. I don't care if you're in a private institution or a public institution. There is not a private institution in this country which does not get public funds in some way, shape, or form. To some extent all of us are beholden to each other, and the first message is to drop the shackles of your territory and say "What can I do for you, the citizens of the State of Minnesota?" Then, you've got a chance, and you're not going to worry whether too much money goes to public libraries, or to the state libraries, or the universities, or anybody else. And, for those of you who are in large libraries, such as the University of Minnesota, I read you a quotation: "To whom much is given, much is required," (Luke, Chapter 12, verse 48), and that's a fact. I spoke at a meeting of the Association of Research Libraries about a month ago pointing out for the third time in less than fifteen months, that they are the "haves" and to them is given the major responsibility for making national networking operate. In this State of Minnesota, it is the large institutions — the Minneapolis Public Library, St. Paul Public Library, Hennepin County Library, University of Minnesota Library, St. Cloud State, and Mankato. They are the ones I can remember, and the ones which seem to have the large collections in this State. It's their responsibility to prepare to give, to give,

and to give. As they say in the United Way, "Give until it hurts, and then give again." Only then do you have a chance of getting the support you need from your state legislature. If you want to get the state legislature to support a statewide cooperative program, you're going to have to do more than talk about it, and you're going to have to show how it works and what would happen if you don't get the money to continue it.

You should work toward developing a single multitype library network. You have eleven systems in Minnesota. Now, these systems should cover geographically the whole State. If they don't, the State Library should extend the borders so they do. Whether all the counties have entered or not is immaterial. Draw the boundaries, and say to county A, when you decide to join, that's your system. What you have done is ended the problem of who goes where. At some point you have to make decisions; that's the first one. Okay, now, you have the State carved up into eleven systems and geographically everybody's covered. At the moment, they're simply public library systems, and that's your first problem, isn't it? How are you going to make a change in the law so they become a system which worries about the needs, problems, and services of academic libraries, public libraries, special libraries, and of school libraries? It's simple. It really is.

About six or seven years ago in Illinois, when I was still at the American Library Association, I was Chairman of the Illinois Library Association Library, Development-Legislation Committee. I perceived the problem and decided the easiest way to handle it was to take the existing state agency, the State Library, and to amend its laws to give it the authority and responsibility to coordinate total library service. I worked on a draft of the law with the staff of the State Library. We had hoped to introduce the bill the year before I became Director of the State Library, but, for some reason, it was decided at the last moment that it wasn't a propitious time to introduce the bill. Shortly after I became the Director of the State Library. I took the bill, which had not been introduced, reworked it, updated it, and introduced it. Who do you think formed my greatest opposition — some of the past members of the staff of the State Library. When I was going to do it for them, it was great; when I was going to do it because now I was State Librarian, that was power grab. But, if you're not accused of power grabs, you're not a true State Librarian.

The State Library is the only legal library agency you have in this State of Minnesota. You don't call it the State Library. You have a fancy name for it — OPLIC, or something like that. If you'd pardon a personal aside, I think it is not as effective as it might be because you cut away part of its guts, and it only has one piece of its responsibility. It still is, however, the only state agency that can coordinate your total system. Don't create a new one. The hardest thing to do today is to try to get the legislature to create a new agency. They won't do it. If you want to delay, if you want to sabotage state library systems in the State of Minnesota, advocate a new agency. You'll kill it immediately, because it is considered creating new bureaucracy and today that's not very popular. We want to give power back to the people — whatever that means. So, if you want to advocate a new agency, great, that will put you back ten more years. Now, if you want action, you take OPLIC and revise the law so that it represents all types of libraries. Let's not give it operating authority, nor direct authority, because that's not what it needs; only coordinating authority and responsibility. OPLIC should have responsibility for developing and coordinating total cooperative library services for the State of Minnesota, including academic, school, public, and special libraries. What is needed is a mandate by the legislature. It doesn't specify how to do it, and it doesn't say OPLIC can tell public, academic, school, and special libraries what to do. It simply says that they have planning and coordinating responsibility.

The first step, then, is to get the legislative authority. Obviously, that agency has to have at least minimal staff to do the job. That means it has to have a staff that has some expertise in the areas of academic librarianship, public librarianship, school librarianship, special librarianship, planning and evaluation. You need a staff that has this kind of strength.

I told you about the law which was passed in Illinois which gave the State Library responsibility. It was interesting that the

lawyer who handled the bill for the Secretary of State under which I operated was very enthusiastic, and he somehow thought that I should have more authority than I wanted. The law includes in it a State Library Advisory Committee. They didn't have operating authority. They were advisory, however, they were strong and effective enough so that the State Library — I'm pleased to say — in the last seven years, never failed to follow their advice. In other words, I never went against the advice of the Committee. Do you know why? I made sure I selected the strongest persons in the State to serve as members of the Committee. We respected each other, even when we disagreed strongly. When we finally agreed on a decision, we all accepted it and lived with it.

No matter how well you word the bill, you may end up with some wording in it which you have to change. It is easy to change if these are technical changes. If you write the law properly, you shouldn't have to change the substance of it. All the law has to say is that the State Library has the responsibility. You spell it out very generally; you do not get too specific. If we, in Illinois, wrote our bill with too much detail and specificity, we would be in serious trouble. Do you know why? We would lose our flexibility.

Where you get into the necessary detail is in your rules and regulations which you develop later after the law is passed and, even then, you try not to make it too detailed. That's the problem in Washington, D.C., today. One of the comments made by President Ford, with which I agree, has to do with over-regulation in Washington. In other words, some agencies write such detailed regulations in order to implement the law that the regulations are ten times as long as the law. They're so afraid of themselves they hedge every possible problem and exception. They really are well-meaning people, believe me, but they think of every possible problem and they hedge and hedge and by the time they are through, they're in a morass of detail. You go to Washington and say, "Can I do this?" it will take them three days to find out if you can do it. Make sure your law is written so it gives specific responsibility but leaves details to rules and regulations. We drafted the rules and regulations for the Illinois Systems Act at the same time we drafted the Act. Many of you may not remember this, but Bob Rohlf was our Project Director and did the study for us in Illinois. We finished developing the plan and the recommendations by the end of October. Bob was under contract with us until the end of December. I asked Bob to draft suggested rules and regulations. The advantage was that people who worried about how we were going to interpret the law could review the draft of the rules and regulations. They saw a package. They saw not only the law, but also how the State Library intended to implement the law. That removed some of the fears that we had from people who thought we might get too much authority. So, it's another suggestion to keep in mind.

You have the law. But the law is only a piece of paper. What makes it work is people. You have to have faith, and you have to have no fears. There are two things that cause most of our problems today — fear and funding. As I said once before, I think fear is a more serious problem. The fear that we're going to lose our authority, the fear that we're going to lose our clientele. There are some small libraries in Illinois, I'm sure there must be some in Minnesota, too, that won't join a cooperative because they're afraid their patrons who have access to other libraries will stop going to their own. That's a real fear. Another fear comes from those who seem to think the minute they join a network they'll be inundated with users. I said to one fairly decent size public library in Illinois who had this fear — "It's unlikely that you would suddenly be flooded with patrons from the surrounding area; believe me, it won't happen." It's unique when a library is flooded with new patrons. Many libraries have a nonresident clientele. They come in and unless you have a guard at the door who checks the identification of every person, you don't know who is really using your library — a resident or a nonresident. If you join a cooperative, you are going to have some increase in users. Usually, in the first month or two, but then it settles down.

It reminds me of the problems of integration. Some years ago when we were fighting the battle of integration of libraries, the Blacks in one of the Southern cities fought hard to integrate the local public library.

They went to court, and they integrated it. But in order to not have the Blacks sit, the library removed all the tables and chairs for everybody — so it was only a standup library. After about the second month, the use by Blacks dropped to practically nil. And, of course, they put the tables and chairs back. Someone asked one of the Black leaders what happened. After fighting so hard to integrate that library, why did they give up? He said, "We didn't give up, we fought for the principle, and established the principle. We don't need the central library, we're satisfied with our own branch. We want the right to go there when we need it." That's the point of cooperation. People want the right to use your collection when they need it. They don't want it everyday. They're satisfied with their own library with its strengths and weaknesses. They're going to use you only when they need you as a supplement. Now there are exceptions but, generally speaking, that's the rule. So drop your fears about what cooperation is going to do to you in terms of over-use, over-abuse — if you like that term better. Say to yourself, "In the long run I will benefit."

Let me tell you another reason why you're going to benefit. There's not enough money today, as you well know. We're living in a time when we are experiencing a combination of recession and inflation. Money is tight. People are voting against bond issues of all kinds. The Federal Government wants to cut Federal library funds. The state governments are doing the same thing. We're all having problems, right? We recognize the fact that there are financial problems today. But, I remind you that five years ago the problems were different, and I remind you that a year from now they'll be different again. There never is a good time to ask for money for library programs. I've never known a good year in my 26 years of library work. Every year is a bad one. Sharing of resources and working cooperatively does result in a more cost-effective use of our limited funds.

When I went to the Illinois legislature in 1964 to fight for the systems money, I was told by librarians that it was a bad year. The State was having a battle for reapportionment. We had a Governor who was Democratic; the Senate was Republican; the House was Democratic. I was told all kinds of dire reasons why we wouldn't get funding. I was told that I should not be too upset if our efforts failed the first time — that it generally took two or three tries to get new legislation passed. And, I was furious. I was Chairman of the Committee, and I pounded on the table and I said, "That's not the way it is going to be. If you think it is, don't participate. You should only stay in this room if you are a believer. Either you believe with me that it's going to work the first time or leave. We don't need doubters." Everybody stayed. We were believers, and we did it. Do you know how we did it? We were committed. We believed in it, and we worked like crazy. And we worked together as one unit. We, in effect, forgot our differences; we buried them. Academic librarians fought as hard for the Public Library Act as public librarians did, and school and special librarians as well. That's what amazed the legislature — that everybody was for the same program.

So, in Minnesota, if you want to really move on to total cooperation, you're only going to do it if you do it together. You have to forget the fact that the University of Minnesota is unique, and that Minneapolis Public Library has problems and work for a common goal. And, you should not devise legislation that is limited to one special type of library. I am not sure we can support large urban libraries by special funding. That's not the way it's going to happen. If you do it right, they'll get that help. But don't separate it as special legislation — make it part of a package — a total package. Make it equitable so you can sell it to the rural people, the urban legislators, and to the legislators in the suburbs, as well.

In Illinois, for example, we had the problem of Chicago and down State. With the library program, we didn't have that problem. We made sure that there was equity in the program which was developed. Chicago represents 31 percent of the population in the State of Illinois. They are getting approximately 29 percent of the State funds from the formula we devised. That was close enough. We had the Chicago votes and the down State legislators couldn't complain about Chicago getting too much because they were getting their fair share based on population, and that was fine. In other words, you work at developing equity, but you avoid catering to special interests. That doesn't mean in

developing a program and the funding formulas that you don't consider the special problems, but you don't overemphasize the special problems. Instead of giving special attention to Minneapolis Public Library, Hennepin County Library, or the University of Minnesota Library, you plan for resource centers. You indicate you require three, maybe five, resource centers and that funds are needed to pay for actual services provided. Accountability is what it is. You don't give flat grants. You provide a small base grant and fees based on transactions. For example, we give the University of Illinois a flat grant of $40,000 per year plus $1.10 per search and $2.20 per fill. Every time they search a request they get $1.10. If they fill the request, they get an additional $2.20. Then, it's easy to show the legislature why a given number of thousands of dollars will provide for a specific number of loans. We did so much — it cost so much. That's easy; that's accountability.

When it comes to systems, it's a little bit different. You can't devise your services on the same cost basis. You can't measure what it costs to give audio-visual services, children's consultant services, collection building assistance, and the strengthening of the local library in many other ways. That's hard to measure so you must try to do so in terms of total services. Where you can develop measurable statistics, you must do so. I said the other day, in a meeting in Washington, that "Whether you like it or not, we cannot have just qualitative standards; you must have standards which are quantitative with qualitative interpretations." If you don't have quantitative standards, forget it. If you go to a legislator and say I want exemplary library services, he says, "What's that?" If you say I want to increase my collection from 50,000 to 60,000 and it's going to cost X number of dollars to do, he understands. When you say you have to have four staff members at $10,000 each, he understands it. However, when you say I want to have a better staff, that doesn't translate to costs that are understandable. Performance budgeting is needed — you have to be able to measure services.

You've got to develop expanded and new service programs and that requires long-range planning. Your State Library Agency has been required for the last four years to have a five-year long-range plan in order to meet the requirements of the Library Services and Construction Act. This plan is developed according to a certain planning model. There are lots of planning models, but the particular one that we were taught and have to use is called the CIPP model: Context, Input, Process, Product, in that order. It's continuous planning and evaluation. At each stage of CIPP planning, you're doing all four things. You're constantly planning and evaluating. The Office of Library and Learning Resources, U.S. Office of Education, had the Ohio State University School of Education, Evaluation Center, teach us the model and how to use it. The first year's plans weren't the greatest, but the second year's was better, and the third year's even better. Each year we have to revise the plan. What you have is a five-year plan starting with the current year. Next year you eliminate the previous year and add the next year — it's a constant cycle. The state agencies now have four years experience. We've learned pretty well how to do it. In some states, Illinois for example, we now require it for all of our systems. Starting January 1, 1976, a system, to qualify for its funds, must file with the State Library a five-year plan which has to mesh with the State Library's five-year plan. We urge the systems to require their member libraries to develop a five-year plan which will mesh with the system's plan. In other words, if you're going to do planning, it really has to be from the bottom up, as well as from the top down. With such planning, you can have accountability at the local level, system level, or state level. You'll be better able to justify your budget request to the state legislature.

It takes time. When I first learned the intricacies of planning, I threw up my hands and said, "I'm going to have to have two full-time people doing nothing but planning." The faculty at Ohio State said to me, "So," and I said, "I can't afford that much staff." Well, I didn't start out that way, but I worked it out. I discovered that I had to give one staff member full responsibility for planning and provide some other people part-time. I, too, had to spend considerable time on planning. Pretty soon, we did learn to do our planning more efficiently.

It was really most satisfying when, at the

end of the first year while working on our first revision, we looked at all the things that we said we would do and saw what we had accomplished. It was gratifying. For the first time we could actually see that what we had planned really worked. We were able to change the plan in those areas which weren't successful. What did all this accomplish? Well, it gave people faith in the State Library. When we stated that, "Effective at a certain date academic libraries will be part of the network," they were part of the network. People had faith that it would work. And, when we said, "On a certain date special libraries would be part of the network," they consequently became members.

Before I left the State, there was some concern that school libraries would not be invited to join the statewide network on January 1, 1976, as scheduled. I made sure before I left that the policy decision previously agreed to was implemented. In Illinois, today, every type of library has the option, voluntarily, to join the statewide system. Now, what are they getting for it? At this point they are getting only two services: interlibrary loan and reference. But we built flexibility into our policy for system participation. In any given system, the system in working with its member libraries, academic, special, school, and public, can provide as much additional activities and services as it wants. One of the systems, for example, has adopted a reciprocal library card that can be used in the member academic, special, public, and school libraries. There are certain basic services that systems must agree to provide.

But, beyond the basics, each system is challenged to develop for its area those services that can meet their special needs and give attention to any special problems peculiar to the system. Every part of the State is different. Flexibility is the key word. You build on basics. Everybody must do the basics. Beyond that, each system must be challenged to develop varied and effective services and programs — and each system thus challenges the next one. If one system does it, the members in the other system ask why they can't do it. In States as large as Minnesota or Illinois, you're always going to have diversity. You're going to have weak systems; you're going to have strong systems; you're going to have some average systems. You will never have all strong systems. That's just not normal.

The important point of it is that you can move ahead if you want to. Minnesota can have total cooperation tomorrow if it wants to. You have to do more than talk about it. You have to make decisions, and you have to take action. We all go to conventions — ALA, MLA, and the others. We all talk about what we're going to do; we all get excited and then we go home and that's it. We go home, and we're so busy doing the daily work that we never do any of the things we discussed at the convention. Why don't we follow-up on our good intentions? Because we don't provide for the proper follow-up. We don't get the necessary commitment of time from our institutions and their staff — that's the problem. We should not bite off more than we can chew in any one period of time or even in a year. We should take one or two tasks and implement them rather than have a grandiose plan and do nothing.

In developing systems in Illinois, we started with public libraries; then academic; then special; and, finally, school libraries. We added them one at a time. When we first started, our plan was to develop a multitype library system in the following order: public, school, academic, and special. In reality, it didn't work out that way. Reality dictated public, academic, special, then school. School was the most difficult. Why? First, there were more of them. Second, they were the ones who had the least number of professional librarians and library service. Third, they're the ones who seem to threaten everybody more than anybody else. There were many reasons why the schools became the last to be added. But, the fact that we told the schools that they would definitely be included meant they supported our program from the beginning. Do you know when we fulfilled our commitment to support school libraries? Three years ago the school librarians came and said, "Okay, you've been so successful with public library legislation — we want to get a bill through on school library service, and we want you to help us get it through." Fine. Through the Library Development Committee of the Illinois Library Association we helped draft the legislation. In the process, we argued and debated. The public librarians and the academic librarians became interested in

the problems of school libraries and provided professional input along with school librarians. We shaped a bill which was acceptable to the Committee. Last year we introduced it, worked for it, and successfully passed it. Unfortunately, the Governor vetoed it. And it really hurt; it was the first major piece of library legislation that we lost. The legislation passed again this year. The Governor, toward the end of the session, announced a shortage of funds, invoked a 6 percent cut across the board, killing all new programs. He, again, vetoed the school library bill. Now, you know, it's hard and discouraging. For two solid years school librarians and other professional librarians in the State worked very hard to pass that bill. What are they going to do next year? What do you think they're going to do? They are going to go back to the legislature again. They will not support the Governor in this year's election.

The point I'm making is when you work together — even when you fail — you still pick yourself up and try again. You don't give up if you believe in what you are doing. Each time you fail, you study why you failed in order to do a better job next time. For example, one of the reasons the first school bill was not signed was that we didn't do a good enough job of talking to the Governor and his staff about the bill. We worked harder the second time, but the unusually tight economic situation hurt. So, each time you learn.

Let me summarize my major points. If you want to develop a statewide library system in Minnesota which will interface with the national system, what you have to do is try to get all types of libraries working together in one system. Don't set up an academic system, a public library system, school system, and special library system and then coordinate them. You will end up with five levels of bureaucracy instead of one. It's not necessary. One system is enough; one bureaucracy is plenty. So, work toward that goal. If you can't do the whole state at once, take the one or two areas in the state that are ready and work on those first. Let them be the examples for the rest of the state. Don't force anybody to join who doesn't want to. Keep them out. All they're going to do anyway is create disruption. We have 551 public libraries in Illinois. As of a month or two ago, 542 had voluntarily joined the systems. This represents 99% of the population. I keep saying to my friends, the trustees of those nine libraries, "I couldn't care less if they never join the system because if they don't believe in systems, they should not be members."

One big problem is the fear of loss of local autonomy. Everybody worries about autonomy. What does it mean? There are three elements, as I see it, that are basic to the preservation of autonomy. First, to maintain control of the budget, the local budget, not the system's. Secondly, you need to maintain control of staff, including the hiring and firing. Thirdly, control of acquisitions and collection building. There are no requirements in Illinois system membership that affects any one of those three basic rights. Expenditures of system or state money is decided by the system not the local members. The system board has control over these funds. Those funds are used to hire staff, or to buy books — the system has the decision-making authority. You can clarify the autonomy problem if you require people to define what they mean. If you don't agree with my definition make up your own. But get your definition straight and make sure people know what you're talking about. If they disagree, have them define their terms. You'll discover that you are in agreement about 90 percent of the time.

Why am I interested in Minnesota? I'm interested in Minnesota because you're part of a national network that we're trying to develop. The National Commission on Libraries and Information Science developed a plan. You've all seen it, I hope. If you haven't seen it, then you're not a very good professional librarian. If you haven't read our national program document, "Toward a National Program for Library and Information Services: Goals for Action," by now, something is lacking in your continuing education. It's been available since July 1975 and it's free if you write to the Commission. It costs $1.45 if you write to the Government Printing Office. The national program document is the result of three years of work. It includes the ideas, suggestions, and comments, from many, many people all over the country. The Commission held hearings in every geographic region. In addition, there were hearings for special groups. We met with school librarians, academic and special

librarians, and with the private sector; you name the group, we met with them. With their input, we developed a program document. The program document is a concensus document. It has something in it for everybody. I'm sure you've been reading reactions to it in the literature lately. You get a variety of views. Some think it's great. Some think it's not so great. There are four articles and an editorial in the current issue of *Library Journal.* Read them, and make your own judgments. But, before you make your judgment, read the national program document itself. Don't believe what you read about it — read it, and then decide for yourself. One criticism is that this document is oriented toward data processing and the private sector. What's interesting is that the private sector and the data processing people have accused the Commission in writings and meetings of being captive to the librarians. In other words, I don't know a group that doesn't think that we have represented the other group better. What that means is that there is a reasonable balance. The important thing that counts is not whether you agree with every word and idea, but that you agree with the implementation of a national program. Let's not spend the rest of our lives redrafting and refining a document. I could have had a nice easy job in Washington by simply doing drafts for the next ten years. It's easy. But, you see, I just can't do that because I believe in action. I said to the Commission that I wanted to work with them because I believed in action and implementation, not in writing drafts. We finished the document and published it. And now we are working for implementation. If we say we're going to implement objective one — which says to insure basic minimums at the local level — then you've got to make sure that the legislation we recommend does the job you think necessary to insure basic minimums in the State of Minnesota. If we say, then, that we've got to strengthen state library resources, you've got to be sure that the legislation exists and the ideas we push do exactly that.

We are often asked if we are going to go local, state, regional and national — in that order. Our plan is to work at the local, state and national level. Where regionals exist, we will work with them to the extent that they have a program which fits the national program. Regionals work better in some areas than they do in others. They work best where the states are limited in population and large in areas. They become an unnecessary burden for strong states. They become a necessary operation with many states. WICHE is one of the best examples of a regional organization. They have a couple of states that could be on their own. California, for example, has been in WICHE for a long time, but their participation is minimal compared to some of the other states. We do not get involved in each regional organization. We don't try to determine their viability or whether one is good and another weak. We simply point out the problems and raise the difficult questions. You can join the national network as it develops through the State of Minnesota. You don't have to go through any regional organization. However, that doesn't mean you can't participate through a regional if you so desire.

Briefly, what is a national network? First of all, it's not a monolithic network. The best example, I suppose, is the telephone company. You pick up a phone, and you can call any place in the world. The number of telephone companies involved are many. I used to live in a world of illusion thinking that Bell had everything. I got to Washington and discovered that my phone is under C&P, Chesapeake and Potomac, not Bell — and it works just as well as Illinois Bell. We plan to work with existing operations and coordinate them. For example, the automated programs of the Library of Congress, the Ohio College Library Center, Ballots, the State of Washington's automated system, etc., must be coordinated. In addition, there is MINITEX, the Research Libraries Group, U.S. Book Exchange, SOLINET, NELINET, and many others. In other words, we hope to pool what exists in an organizational way, in a communications way, in an operating way. We will improve what is good; we'll ignore what doesn't work, and we'll create new services and organizations only when we need them. At the moment, no Federal agency has the responsibility of operating a national network. Current agencies that could qualify, if given the legislative mandate, are the Library of Congress, the Office of Libraries and Learning Resources, and the National Commission itself. A new agency could be developed,

but I can assure you that this is the last option. We're not sure of the answer — we're still working on it.

We will start with what we have, as I suggested you do in Minnesota. Take your existing agency and, if necessary, amend its organic law to do the job of planning and coordinating a statewide multitype library network.